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361 [342 ●221] the chief and his followers have to move into temporary grass shelters (*imitanda*) during the tree-cutting and harvest seasons, and commoners will camp near their gardens for as many as four months of the year. The *bakabilo*, or hereditary councillors of the Paramount Chief, are also prevented for politico-religious reasons from moving far afield. Of Citimukulu's 160 villages, 52 were under the rule of hereditary councillors or priests in 1934, and of this latter group I should judge that at least 30 were bound for traditional reasons to remain fixed to one locality. For commoners the choice is much freer, although they have a strong tendency to build within a five-mile radius of their relatives. But I have known them make a village on poor soil because they wanted to live on the motor road, or near to a white man's farm. The people also cultivate exhausted soil in areas near a white settlement like Kasama, where the villages move from site to site, sometimes at a distance of a quarter of a mile or so, in order to be near the town. The fishing villages on the banks of the Chambesi are similarly fixed without special reference to the soil possibilities since in this case the value of the fishing is greater than that of the agricultural produce. At Molema, near some valuable fishing pools in the Chambesi, the ground has been under continuous cultivation, chiefly with cassava, for four generations.[1] Apart from these special cases, it can be said that the majority of headmen build villages in the best soil they can find within an area of five or ten square miles of their last site.

Choice of Garden Sites.

241 242 Having founded his village, the next step for the Bemba is to choose his garden plots. In this case he is looking first and foremost for suitable ground for millet cultivation. He has no other object in mind. To select the most suitable spot for his garden he is guided first by certain general factors such as the presence or absence of plenty of high trees and grasses. He divides the *mpanga* into two main categories—the ordinary woodland (*umutengo*) in which gardens are made, and the tall grass-bush country (*icipya*, plur. *ifipya*) which passes locally into thickets (*amateshi*). The *ifipya* are not cultivated though they may be fertile. They are the haunts of buffalo and elephant and are commonly avoided by native paths. The hunter goes there but it is difficult to find a way

[1] Cf. Chap. XVI, p. 341.

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241 husband had been able to dig for her, whether she had been given sufficient seed, and whether she had thought ahead.[1]

The following table shows the succession of the different crops:

[221]

	Sown	*Reaped*
Millet (main crop, *amale ya-kalamba*)	Mid-rains (Dec.–Jan.)	May–July
(quick-growing, *mwangwe*)	Early rains (Nov.)	April
(old burnt garden crop, '*nkungwila*')	Pre-rains (Sept.)	April
Kaffir corn (main gardens)	Mid-rains (Dec.–Jan.)	July and Aug.
(village beds)	Early rains (Nov.)	July
Maize (main gardens)	Pre-rains (Sept.–Oct.)	Feb.
(village beds)	Early rains (Nov.)	March
Ground-nuts (main gardens)	Early rains (Nov.–Dec.)	May
	Late rains (Jan.)	June
Ground-beans (main gardens)	Early rains (Nov.–Dec.)	March–April
Cucurbits (main gardens)	Pre-rains (Sept.–Oct.)	Jan.
(village beds)	Mid-rains (Dec.)	Feb.
Beans (main gardens and	Pre-rains (Sept.–Oct.)	Feb.
Cow-peas village beds)	Early rains (Nov.)	March
	Mid-rains (Dec.–Jan.)	April
	Late rains (Feb.–March)	May–June

Weeding. The Bemba only weed or hoe from sheer necessity and not for appearance sake. On the *ifitimene* neither is necessary during the first year of cultivation because the burning has destroyed the weeds. In the next year ground-nuts should be hoed if overgrown, and cassava beds should, if possible, be dug over in March or April. This is rarely done, except in chiefs' gardens. It seems likely that the Bemba never hoed their gardens constantly as some Bantu peoples do, but the number of *ififwani* that now seem quite overgrown with weeds is probably due to the shortage of male labour. *Mputa* should, technically speaking, be weeded. All over the second- and third-year mounds high grasses spring up during

[1] Another example of intelligent planning was seen in a new village of keen cultivators (Cikwe) in May 1933. Here one owner had seventy-five *mputa* of cassava and potatoes, planted in the early rains and now ripe for use, and three hundred and forty being planted for future use. He also had a hundred and forty-five *mputa* of cow-peas ripe then, thirty-seven of Kaffir corn, and forty-six of ground-nuts. Another owner had a hundred and twelve *mputa* of cassava and potatoes from the beginning of the rains, a hundred and seventy-four recently planted, and eighty-six dug up to be left for cultivation with the succeeding rains, forty-eight *mputa* of cow-peas ripe at the moment, and ten recently sown for leaf-relish later on, and a hundred and one *mputa* of Kaffir corn, while the three other important householders had about the same proportion.

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226 463 [829] race apart, although in reality they differ from other Bemba merely in regard to their fixed habitation, greater degree of intermarriage, and independence of their neighbours. It will be best to sketch fishing methods in general as they are practised all over the country, and then to describe the more complex type of occupation characteristic of these riverine villages.

• 221 226 Bemba methods of fishing, whether by trapping, netting, or poisoning, are only successful in shallow waters. For this reason fish are only caught easily during two seasons of the year: (*a*) *April and May*, i.e. at the end of the rains when the waters are falling on the flats and banks, and the fish may be caught returning to the big rivers from the smaller streams and backwaters, where they had gone to breed a few months earlier. (*b*) *September to November*, i.e. when the level of the water in the rivers has fallen to its lowest and trapping or netting is possible in the main body of the stream, and poison can be used in the smaller rivers. Fish may also be caught sometimes on their way upstream to breed in January or February. But in a river as big as the Chambesi fishing of one kind or another is practised all the year round.

The natives recognize no close season for breeding. Questioned as to why they wish to trap fish that are full of eggs or young fish that are undersized, they answer in some such terms as, 'Well, it is no use leaving the fish for some one else to catch, is it?'

(*a*) *Methods.*

226 [278] 824 1. *Fish poisoning*. The simplest method of catching fish is by the use of a stupefying poison known as *ububa*, which is obtained from the crushed leaves of a bushy plant (*Tephrosia*) cultivated especially for the purpose in any village near a stream.[1] Fish poisoning (*ukusungilo buba*) is a co-operative activity in which the whole village, men, women, and children, join, and which is quite unskilled. The whole village may go out together under the orders of the headman, or a group of villagers may plan their own expedition. The best time of year for such fishing is August to November, when the waters are at their lowest.[2] On the smaller rivers such fishing parties are

[1] Mr. E. B. H. Goodall in *Some Wemba Words*, 1921, states that *buba* is used as a collective term to cover all forms of fish poison collected from various roots and leaves, including the cultivated plant, *kowamushi*, and different forest trees and shrubs, but I only heard the name used for the former.

[2] I have known natives try to fish by this method much earlier, i.e. in July and August, but this will depend on the height of the water.

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241 461 643 622 In 1932 Makassa made one big personal garden of about two and a half acres and medium gardens for five wives, two inherited widows from his predecessor, one widowed sister, and one deserted daughter. The amount of labour required during a nine-months' period for all the garden work of the Citimukulu plus the building of a new village has been given as 561 men and 329 women.[1] Mukuikile—a smaller chief—required 275 men-days for the cutting of his gardens, and 210 women-days for piling the branches.

In general, the *umulasa* labourers are supervised by the chief himself or one of his head officials, and the organization of this irregular labour force is one of the most important tasks he has to undertake, since on it his tribal supply of food depends.

Even though the *umulasa* labourers only work for the inside of a week, there are often as many as twenty or thirty men or women in the gardening team, drawn from different villages all over the *icalo*, so that the chief has not only the power to organize his own garden work but definite possibilities of instruction.

Work and Time Sequence.

• 221 From the main calendar of seasonal activities shown above, it will be seen that the season for tree-cutting, the hardest work of the men, is the cold time of the year, but this lopping of the branches can really be done at any time during the months from April until September when the forest fires which break out in hot weather might threaten to destroy the piled wood. The beginning of tree-cutting usually necessitates the movement of the whole family out into the bush, and thus makes a real break in the rhythm of daily life. During these cold weather months there are few other important food-producing activities for the men. For those who live on rivers, fishing on the flats begins in April and low-water fishing in July. The best months for net-hunting are hot weather at the end of this period. Basket-making and thatching must be done while the grass and reeds are still tall enough,

one more or less round, about 400 paces round; a medium one about 200 paces; a small one only 40 or so. Their area may therefore be calculated as follows:

'Big' gardens—2½ acres approx.
'Medium' gardens—7/10ths of an acre approx.
'Small' gardens—1/40th of an acre approx.

N.B. 4–10 acres of forest is needed according to the growth of trees and type of forest for one acre of garden. These approximations were made for me by Mrs. Gore-Browne.

[1] Cf. p. 258.

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CALENDAR OF SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

Bemba months	*English equivalents*	*Weather*	*Food-supply*	MEN			WOMEN		
				Millet	*Subsidiary*	*Other activities*	*Gardening*		*Other activities*
Kabengele kanono	January	Heavy rain	Hunger month	..	Mound-digging and sowing	*Fishing.* Traps and nets set on flooded banks	..	Mound digging and sowing	Collecting mushrooms and caterpillars.
Kabengele kakalamba	February	,,	Hunger month. Cucurbits ripe	Fencing gardens	,, ,,	Build houses (new village)	..	,, ,,	,, ,,
Kutumpu	March	Rain slackening	Subsidiary crops ripe	..	,, ,,	,, ,,	Harvest (maize)	..	Collecting caterpillars.
Shinde	April	Rains cease	Early millet ripe	..	..	Fish weirs set	Harvest (millet—early)	..	..
Kapepo kanono	May	Cold weather	Ample food-supply	Tree-cutting	..	,, ,,	Harvest (millet—main crop)	Harvest (groundnuts)	..
Kapepo kakalamba	June	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	..	..	,, ,,	,, ,,	..
Cikungulu pepo	July	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	..	..	Piling branches	,, ,,	..
Lipukutu lunono	August	Hot weather	,, ,,	,, ,,	Dry weather sowing	Fish-poisoning. Net-hunting begins	,, ,,	Dry weather sowing	Collecting wild spinaches. Fish-poisoning.
Lipukutu lukalamba	September	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	Fish-poisoning. Net-hunting	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,
Lusuba lunono	October	,, ,,	Less food	Firing gardens	..	,, ,,	Firing gardens	..	Fish-poisoning.
Lusuba lukalamba	November	Early rains	Getting scarce	,, ,,	Mound digging and sowing	Fish-spearing and trapping on flats	..	Mound digging and sowing	Fruits.
Mupundu	December	Mid-rains	Hunger month	Sowing main crop	,, ,,	..	Sowing main crop	,, ,,	Collecting mushrooms.
Cinshi kubili	No English equivalent. The 13th month	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,	,, ,,

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i.e. before the hot weather, but otherwise a man should be able to finish his tree-cutting work by July or August and then to have a month or two more or less free. It must be noted, however, that the demand for European work on roads, &c., coincides with the tree-cutting months, since such labour has to be postponed till the cold, dry weather.[1]

The coming of the rains in October and November brings a complete change of programme. The softening of the ground means the beginning of the planting season, and the re-hoeing of village beds and the making of *mputa* on the *ififwani* should go on till February or March. There is fishing in the big rivers at the beginning of the rains, but not universally. At the end of the period (March) the gardens have to be fenced. Thus, apart from the tree-cutting season these months, November to March, should be the heaviest of the year. Whereas a garden has got to be cut if the staple crop is to be sown at all, the amount of hoeing done depends on individual energy and initiative, and since the hoeing months coincide with the season of scarcity, it is this work which tends to be skimped.

The women's work is more continuous throughout the seasons. During the cold weather months they have not only branches to pile but the harvest to get in. In the hot weather there is less garden work, but this is the season of brewing and the time when the women have the greatest difficulty in hunting for relish. In the wet weather their work is very similar to that of the men, since they also hoe and sow. In February and March the women have less garden work, but take time in going to and fro in their *ififwani* to collect the ripening pumpkins, then reap the early-maturing *mwangwe*, dry and beat it, and collect food from relatives &c. In general, these villages which rely chiefly on mound cultivation[2] are at their busiest at this time of year, while in the ordinary community it is not a heavy season.

The Rhythm of Work.

The Bemba, like many other primitive peoples, reckon the passage of time by the activities performed in it, rather than by

[1] In the early years of the copper mines (1930–1) the figures for voluntary labour rose to a peak during the rainy months, and fell during the times of the tree-cutting season.

[2] Cf. the description of cultivation in a typical village (Chap. XV).

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461 Men usually ask for three months' leave to 'make a garden', but most of them treat their time in the village as a holiday as well as
512 a gardening time. Thus it can be reckoned that for this, the most essential activity, the Bemba requires as a minimum four weeks' work, but usually takes two or three months a year interspersing this task with others.

Sowing millet is not a laborious process and a big garden can be planted in a day or two. Fencing, in those parts of the country where it is necessary, natives describe with rather a rare unanimity as the work of one month, thus making a minimum of two to three months' agricultural labour which can be done by men only.

Hoeing falls into a different category, both because this is a task that men and women do jointly, and also because there is every degree of individual variation in the amount done. To get good results a substantial amount of hoeing should be done, according to native theory, but to get some food out of the ground, surface hoeing only would be adequate (cf. pp. 303, 390). The main hoeing consists of the digging up of the old burnt gardens (*ifitimeme*), but besides this, a man in a new village has to make new garden beds the first year, and should re-hoe the old completely every two or three years. He should weed Kaffir corn, burn the old legume stalks on the *mputa*, &c., for each of which tasks I have added one week. If labour is short or the people hungry, this last work is not done. I should estimate that the minimum of time a man should spend on hoeing and weeding would be one month, but to use the soil to the best advantage, two or three would be necessary, doing a little every day (cf. p. 308).

Other activities such as fishing, hunting, or handicrafts are sporadic, and probably the ordinary Bemba spends about a month a year all told on such work. To build a house would take a fortnight for a man working alone, but houses will last for three or four years.

• 221 To estimate the amount of male labour required annually, the reader should turn to the table given on p. 315. He will realize
461 that each Bemba has three or four gardens to deal with annually,
512 as well as his village beds. Thus the work can probably be listed as follows:

(*a*) Garden of present year to be cut = 4 weeks—during May-September.

Garden of present year to be fenced = 4 weeks—during February-March.

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(*b*) Garden of last year to be dug up for ground-nuts or other crop = 2 weeks—during August–October. 221 461

(*c*) Garden of three years ago to be burnt and prepared for third-year millet = 1 week—during August–October. 512

(*d*) Garden of four years ago to be dug into mounds for beans or other crops = 2 weeks—during October–January.

Total = 13 weeks as a bare minimum, of which 8 can only be done by male labour.

In the village beds the labour expended can be roughly estimated as follows:

(*e*) Digging of new village beds = 2 weeks—usually during December–February.

(*f*) Complete rehoeing of old beds = 3 weeks—usually during December–February.

Or light hoeing of old beds = 1 week—usually during September–February.

(*g*) Burning, weeding, &c. = 1 week—usually during September–October.

Total = 4–6 weeks.

The total time spent both in the main gardens and on the village beds could thus be reckoned as a minimum period of 17–19 weeks, of which 8 weeks—4 during the dry season and 4 during the wet—can only be done by men. Probably, however, under ordinary village conditions and combining other tasks such as house-building, fishing, &c., the Bemba usually take 4–5 weeks longer to produce the same results, making a total of 5–6 months' work.

How is the Bemba to find this amount of time under modern conditions of migratory labour? He can clearly not produce the optimum results from the soil, but merely the minimum amount of food which will keep his family from destitution. 221 512

From the agricultural point of view the difficulty of the Northern Rhodesia labour situation is the length of time for which the men go to the mines and their lack of facilities for getting back to their villages. Recruiting ceased in the area in 1930, and the men mostly make their way to the mines (300–500 miles) on foot, or by bicycle. The Rand mineworker signs up for an eleven months' contract usually, with his return passage home automatically deducted from 221 512 464

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his wages. But the Bemba has either to pay 35*s.* for a lorry passage home or he must bicycle or walk. The first is considered a prohibitive passage, except for the better-off native, and the second is only done when a man is really sick of the town and feels he must get home—say after two or three years or even longer. He cannot reasonably return every year for the three months' garden labour which we have reckoned as necessary with the present method of cultivation. However, it can be seen from the table on p. 315 that, if a man spent two years at home, he could make millet gardens and fence them in successive years. He could then spend two years at the mines, leaving his wife to plant the third-year millet. She would thus have some millet every year if her husband had facilities for returning again in the fourth year, but this is obviously only one of the minimum solutions described above. For an improved food-supply an alternative method to tree-cutting or greater ease of transport to and from the mines are required.

The Will to Work.

At the opening of this book I described Bemba diet as inadequate and variable, and their methods of gardening as primitive compared to those of their neighbours. In some of the succeeding chapters I have tried to account for the shortage in their annual and daily food-supply by describing the people's difficulties in preparing and producing different foodstuffs, or in their methods of handling, distributing, and storing them. We have still to ask one final question, and its answer is to be found scattered here and there throughout the book. Put crudely, it is the query which springs naturally to the mind of most Europeans living in this area, viz. 'If the Bemba go short of food so often, why don't they work a good bit harder and drink less beer?' Successive Government reports describe this tribe as 'poor agriculturists' or 'incorrigibly lazy',[1] and the traveller, gazing at ill-weeded gardens and broken-down fences, cannot resist the same type of comment. The average working day of a man has been estimated as only four hours, even though the women are undoubtedly overworked at certain seasons of the year, and I have given a good many facts to show

[1] e.g. the Government Report for Native Affairs, 1936, p. 47. 'Natives in this Province generally speaking strike one as singularly unenterprising and indeed downright lazy about the growing of foodstuffs.'